

CHAPTER 6: PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

While the previous chapter focused on physical improvements that are needed to support walking and bicycling in Fauquier County, there are a number of other important issues including enforcement, encouragement/promotion, education and awareness that should be part of a comprehensive program. This chapter sets forward a number of recommendations that will help the County promote and increase the safety of walking and bicycling.

ACTION 7: Implement safety education for pedestrians, bicyclists, equestrians, and blueway enthusiasts of all ages, as well as motorists.

Safety education is needed for all ages in Fauquier County, and should not only address the education needs of pedestrians and bicyclists, but should also address the need to educate motorists to encourage safer behaviors. Adult bicycling education can be achieved through the League of American Bicyclists, which certifies trainers for on-bike training courses. In addition, there are some excellent educational Public Service Announcements available through the Streetsmarts Campaign for the Washington Metro Region (see <http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/activities/planning/safety.asp>) Information developed through this program was federally funded, therefore the materials are in the public domain and may be re-used (with credit to the original sponsors).

Excellent information on blueway safety was developed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The online guide found at <http://www.boat-ed.com/va/index.htm> includes information regarding the legal requirements of operating a boat in Virginia, proper distress signals, and a section on canoeing, kayaking and rafting.

A variety of resources are available for horse trail safety information, including a youth safety guide through the American Youth Horse Council. The Virginia Horse Council is an authoritative resource locally on such topics, and should be consulted regarding future equestrian safety efforts.

Pedestrian and bicycle issues can be incorporated into a variety of existing curricula at elementary and middle school levels, as well as in Parks and Recreation Programs. There are a number of existing sources for funding and assistance in integrating pedestrian and bicycle safety education into schools.



Bike Smart, Virginia! is an initiative of the Virginia Department of Health to prevent bicycle-related injuries and fatalities in communities throughout the state. The initiative has several components to educate citizens about bicycle safety and to make safety equipment (such as bicycle helmets) available.

One component, *Bike Smart, Virginia Schools!* is a collaborative project with the Virginia Departments of Education, Health and Motor Vehicles and the non-profit organization, BikeWalk Virginia. The project's goal is to teach children safe biking behavior to reduce injuries and fatalities. This is accomplished through training-the-trainer workshops held around the state. School health and PE teachers receive 2 days of training in methods of teaching bicycle safety and become "Bike Smart Basics" Certified. The six-week course for elementary and middle schools includes on-the bike instruction (including: helmet safety, crash avoidance, bike handling skills, rules of the road etc.) and is taught as part of the school's Health and P.E. curriculum. Trainings are offered throughout the year across the state. Additional information can be found at www.vahealth.org/civp/bike/schools.asp.

A viable source for pedestrian and bicycle safety education funding in Virginia is the Department of Motor Vehicle's Safety Grant. The Virginia DMV accepts grant applications each year in March that support Virginia's primary transportation safety goal of "reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries that result from traffic crashes". Applications must also support specific safety areas that are highlighted each year, and often include pedestrian/bicycle safety. Grant applications are accepted from state agencies, universities, localities and non-profit organizations and the typical funding year is from October 1st through September 30th. Guidelines for the current year's application can be found at www.dmvnow.com/webdoc/pdf/tss10a.pdf

The County should work with the health and P.E. coordinator for Fauquier County Public Schools to conduct additional research into the program and gain the involvement of local schools.

ACTION 8: Initiate a *Safe Routes to School* program in Fauquier County.

Local and national estimates suggest that up to thirty percent of morning peak hour vehicle trips are school bound trips or include dropping students at schools. The environmental, social, health, and safety (not to mention direct costs) of a system that delivers most students to school via school buses and personal automobiles is significant. While increasing the numbers of students that bicycle and walk to school can help mitigate the negative impacts of the current system, safe routes to school must be created before parents and school officials will feel comfortable encouraging students to use them.

Safe Routes to School (SR2S) programs have been implemented successfully in the U.S. for the past decade. Most programs include some combination of engineering, encouragement, and enforcement strategies aimed at making it safe for more children to walk in their communities. This program will be most successful in schools located within the villages and suburban parts of the County, however health-based SR2S programs have also been successfully implemented in rural areas of Virginia by using walking routes on the school campus.

Fauquier County should consider applying for a Federal grant to fund a SR2S pilot program. This grant source provides 100% (no match required) funding for engineering, education, enforcement and encouragement programs within 2 miles of schools that serve Kindergarten through the 8th grade. This pilot program could be based on existing models used in Charlottesville and elsewhere to plan physical improvements (including sidewalk construction and pedestrian crossing improvements) and implement safety education programs (see Chapter 6) at interested schools. The goal would be to expand the SR2S program to other schools over time.



ACTION 9: Conduct programs and events that encourage walking and bicycling for fun, health and fitness, and for transportation.

Community-wide encouragement and advocacy for walking and bicycling can be achieved through events, ongoing programs, and town- or County-sponsored initiatives. An important key to success is having a coordinated approach, a consistent message and focused activities. Suggested activities, coordinated through the MBPAC and the Department of Economic Development, include the following:

Connections Website: the County should develop a website for local trails and bicycling enthusiasts, as well as visitors to the area. The site could include maps of on- and off-road facilities, recommended touring routes that provide access to historic and cultural sites in Fauquier County, resources such as bicycle shops, bike clubs, and a calendar of events. The website should identify locations of bridle trails, as well as canoe trails in Fauquier County. The website should also promote trail user etiquette, as described in the previous chapter.

Employer Health Programs: the County should promote active lifestyle programs among local employers, and should become a model employer in this regard. For example, ongoing programs should encourage County employees to regularly walk, bicycle, canoe, ride horses, etc. to improve cardiovascular health and wellness. Incentives should be

provided to employees who participate. For example, Arlington County provides a \$25/month stipend to employees who walk or bike to work at least 80% of the time. There are many other similar examples of encouragement programs throughout the Commonwealth.

Community Events: the County should work with local volunteer groups and local villages to sponsor events such as community bike rides for children, walk-a-thons and community trail walks, and guided walking and cycling tours for elected officials. The MBPAC should encourage individual localities to organize and participate in annual bike-to-work day activities.

Most people are aware of the environmental benefits of bicycling instead of driving an automobile, yet do not fully realize the health benefits that walking and bicycling provide. This strategy encourages the development of bikeways, walkways and trails to promote physical activity and wellness programs for people of all ages in Fauquier County. The initiative should emphasize the links between walking and bicycling and weight loss, disease prevention and longer lives for all members of the community. Targeted audiences for this outreach effort should include:

- Community-based health improvement partnerships
- Elder care facilities
- Hospitals
- Schools

Specific projects can be targeted based on local needs and ideas, however a key component of each project should be a community outreach and promotion effort that highlights the health benefits of walking and bicycling and gives practical advice about where to walk or bicycle in the community.

ACTION 10: Develop employee commute incentive programs in Fauquier County.

Fauquier County should encourage bicycle commuting by participating in Bike-to-Work Day, and by providing information to employers and employees. A good resource for information on this topic is the *Guide to Bicycle Commuting* developed by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

Public agencies in Fauquier County should be model employers: providing monetary bike/walk commute incentives, showers and lockers for employees, and "Guaranteed Ride Home" policies for emergencies and inclement weather. One example is Arlington, VA's alternative commute program: employees who walk or bike to work at least 50% of the days in any given month receive a \$35 per month stipend. The stipend is paid out in a lump sum twice a year.

ACTION 11: Provide training to local agency staff regarding “what to look for” when conducting plan review with respect to trail, bikeway and pedestrian accommodations.

Pedestrian and bicycle design is a new field of study that will require background training for local agency staff who are responsible for development reviews and for coordinating with VDOT on transportation projects. This type of training has been conducted in other Virginia cities and counties, and has been funded by VDOT in the past. It may be possible to partner with VDOT’s Culpeper office to offer this type of training in Fauquier County in the near future.

ACTION 12: Improve enforcement of laws concerning the safe interaction of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists in shared environments.

Education should be provided to law enforcement officers who may not be aware of rules of the road and aggressive motor vehicle behavior toward bicyclists and pedestrians. The Maryland Office of Highway Safety for example, organizes safety training events for officers to raise awareness of about rights, rules, and appropriate responses to incidents involving conflicts between motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.

Safety awareness programs can result in significant improvements in motorist behavior at the local level. For example, the Laurel, MD Police Department holds an annual Pedestrian Safety Awareness Week in Laurel’s downtown each year. Each day, they focus on a different theme, culminating in a Safety Saturday event aimed at raising general awareness of pedestrian issues. Weeklong activities include speed trailers on Main Street, targeted enforcement (drivers who do not yield to pedestrians at crosswalks are ticketed), and safety awareness messages.

Bicycle patrol is another strategy for increasing the visibility of bicycling in the region and involving law enforcement more extensively in bicycling issues. Bicycle squad members work with local staff to provide bike and pedestrian safety education through youth groups and schools, as well as simply talking with residents on their beats. The MBPAC should coordinate grants and other resources to establish a bike patrol in the County.

Professional law enforcement can also be supplemented with volunteer and community-based patrols. This approach can be used with great success on multi-use trails, and along walking and biking routes to school.

ACTION 13: Provide for convenient and safe pedestrian and bicycle access to future transit facilities and vehicles.

While Fauquier County's current transit service is limited mainly to shuttle buses and vanpool, a number of transit proposals have been discussed in recent years. In all future transit projects, convenient and safe pedestrian and bicycle access should be a top priority.

Improved pedestrian and bicycle access can significantly extend the reach of the transit system. The County should implement a combined education and marketing program promoting the benefits of biking and walking to transit, in conjunction with improvements to pedestrian and bicycle access to transit facilities. Transit stations, bus stops and park and ride lots should be accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists. Future buses should be equipped with bike racks, and future trains should be designed with areas where bicycles can be brought aboard. More information on bicycle access to transit can be found in the Transit Cooperative Research Program report entitled *Bicycle Access to Transit*.

